

974.46

L784

BRIGHTON

No. 974.46  
L784

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
OF THE  
CITY OF BOSTON

Cambridge, Mass.

974.46  
L784

An account of some of the  
bridges over Charles River.

1869  
1985

DEC 21 1864

## Boston Public Library

Do not write in this book or mark it with pen or pencil. Penalties for so doing are imposed by the Revised Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

*This book was issued to the borrower on the date last stamped below.*










Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015





*from his friend  
Bac Livermore*

AN ACCOUNT

OF

SOME OF THE BRIDGES

OVER

CHARLES RIVER,

AS CONNECTED

WITH THE GROWTH OF CAMBRIDGE.

CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED AT THE CHRONICLE PRESS.

1858.



BOSTON PUBLISHED BY  
BRIGHTON BRANCOIL

AN ACCOUNT

OF

SOME OF THE BRIDGES

OVER

CHARLES RIVER.

---

CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED AT THE CHRONICLE PRESS.

1858.

Ar 5278

34

1936

37

37

38

40

41

42

974.46

784

12-21-44  
24-44

## BRIDGES OVER CHARLES RIVER.

---

CAMBRIDGE owes much to its Bridges. They have in a great degree assisted the progress and advanced the interest of the place. This is especially true of the West Boston Bridge, which, by increasing the conveniences of travel and communication with other places, by stimulating the settlement of Cambridgeport, by initiating and fostering many public improvements, by contributing to the building of minor roads, and constructing at great cost other bridges and turnpikes as auxiliary to itself, has laid the foundation of that steady growth and substantial progress which has characterised this community.

Some account, therefore, of the bridges leading from Cambridge, over Charles River, particularly of the West Boston Bridge, cannot fail to be of interest to those who have received, and will continue to receive from them great and permanent benefits.

In Holmes' history of Cambridge we find that "in the year 1656 the inhabitants of Cambridge consented to pay a proportion of a rate of the sum of two hundred

pounds towards the building of a bridge over Charles River," which is the bridge leading from Old Cambridge to Brighton. This was the first bridge ever built over that river. It was erected in 1660, and for many years was called "the Great Bridge." Not long after its erection it was ordered "to be layed in oyle and lead." The same history also says that after King Philips' war had terminated, "the town ordered that the Selectmen should improve the timber, that was brought for the fortification, for the repairing of the Great Bridge. "This bridge was rebuilt in 1690, at the expense of Cambridge and Newtown, with some aid from the public treasury." "In 1734 the town received £300 from the General Court, toward defraying the expense of repairing the Great Bridge over Charles River; and, together with a vote of thanks to the Court, voted thanks to Jacob Wendell, Esq., and Mr. Cradock, for their kindness in procuring and collecting a very bountiful subscription for the same purpose."

The West Boston Bridge was the second *toll* bridge built over the River. The Charles River Bridge, leading from Boston to Charlestown, was incorporated March 9, 1785.

Sixty-six years ago, the Legislature of Massachusetts concluded that "Whereas, the erecting of a bridge over Charles River, from the westerly part of Boston, near the Pest House, (so called,) to Pelham's Island, in the Town of Cambridge, would be of great public

utility ; and Francis Dana and others, and Oliver Wendell and others, have respectively petitioned this Court for an Act of Incorporation, to empower them to build said bridge, and many persons in expectation of such an act, have subscribed to a fund for executing and completing the aforesaid purpose :—

*“Be it therefore enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same,*

“That the Honorable Francis Dana, the Honorable Oliver Wendell, the Honorable James Sullivan, Henry Jackson Esq., Mungo Mackay and William Wetmore, Esquire, so long as they shall continue proprietors in said fund, together with all those who are, and those who shall become proprietors of said fund or stock, shall be a Corporation and *body politic*, under the name of the Proprietors of the *West Boston Bridge, &c.*” After describing its powers and privileges,

It was “*Further enacted*, That after the toll shall commence, the said Corporation shall pay annually to Harvard College, or University, the sum of *three hundred pounds*,” which was to continue during the term of the Charter, “for the purpose of defraying the expense of tuition to indigent scholars.”

This grant was subsequently changed to “*two hundred pounds per annum*,” and the “President and Fellows of Harvard College” had given to them “a discretionary

power to apply said sum, or any part thereof to the support of two permanent Tutors in said University."

The original Act was approved March 9, 1792, by JOHN HANCOCK, then Governor of the State.

The proprietors were notified to meet "at the Bunch of Grapes Tavern, in Boston, on Wednesday the 21st day of March, 1792, *precisely* at six o'clock, P. M., to choose a Clerk and any other officers they may think proper."

At that meeting the list of shareholders was submitted, and among them are names which have won an honorable distinction for themselves, and added much to the renown of the State. There are the names of Francis Dana, once a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and U. S. Minister to Russia, Perez Morton, for a long time the State Attorney General, Nathan Dane, author of the celebrated ordinance of 1787, and founder of the Law School at Cambridge, Christopher Gore, once Governor of the State, and Senator in Congress, James Sullivan, an eminent jurist, also at one time governor of the State, William Phillips, at one time the Lieutenant Governor of the State, and Oliver Wendell, Harrison Gray Otis, Henry Jackson, Caleb Davis, who were distinguished at the bar, most, if not all of them, having held important judicial and political positions.

There are also the names of Peter C. Brooks, Thomas Dennie, Thomas H. Perkins, and Samuel Parkman, emi-



ment as capitalists and merchants ; and other names familiar to Boston and vicinity, such as Appleton, Austin, Thorndike, Bulfinch, Brimmer, Brattle, Brewster, Cabot, Coolidge, Cushing, Derby, Dexter, Eliot, Greenleaf, Grant, Gray, Henshaw, Jarvis, Minot, Mackay, Mason, James Prince, (the U. S. Marshal,) Sturgis, Russell, Scollay, Tudor, Winthrop, Ward, Wetmore ; names that at every stage of the history of the State, from its settlement to the present moment, have contributed to promote its welfare and elevate its character.

The first officers of the Corporation were Francis Dana, *President* ; Mungo Mackay, *Treasurer* ; and Harrison Gray Otis, *Clerk* ; and Francis Dana, Oliver Wendell, James Sullivan, Perez Mortot, Charles Bulfinch, Samuel Parkman, Joseph Blake, Henry Prentiss, Caleb Davis, John Derby, John Winthrop, and Jonathan L. Austin constituted the first Board of Directors. James Sullivan, Samuel Parkman, Joseph Head, and Samuel A. Eliot, have since been the Presidents ; and Samuel Dunn, Ozias Goodwin, Heman Lincoln, Richard Derby, Jonathan Chapman, and Joseph Mackay, have since been the Treasurers of the Corporation.

There was a meeting of the Directors March 23, 1792, when an assessment of ten dollars a share was laid, and it was voted "That the sum of seven hundred pounds be, and hereby is offered to Messrs. Mungo Mackay, and Henry Prentiss jointly, as a consideration to super-

intend the whole labor of completing a road over the marsh and the building the bridge and abutments, to procure laborers, and manufacturers for the purpose, and make contracts with individuals for materials of all kinds, and for their labors, submitting however all contracts of importance to the sub-committee of Directors for confirmation. And it being understood that said Mackay and Prentiss, (if they undertake the business,) shall devote their *whole time*, or the *whole time* of one of them to the business aforesaid. And they, the said Mackay and Prentiss, shall have liberty in case they find their private concerns incompatible with completing their contract to resign their appointment." Messrs. Mackay and Prentiss accepted the commission. After rejecting a bridge model offered by Samuel Blodgett, the commissioners were instructed to engage "Zenas Whiting as a master workman, to build a piece of bridge over the creek on Cambridge marsh, *provided* said Whiting may be willing to contract for that only, but if not to build the entire bridge."

The "*Pest House*," the point from which the bridge started on the Boston side, and at that time situated opposite to where the building formerly known as Parkman's Market now stands, being wanted for the accommodation of the workmen, it was purchased.

The Board was very minute in its directions ; it voted "that the causeway should be painted stone color ;"

that "eighteen posts should be erected on the causeway;" that "two toll houses be built, one at the abutments on the Boston side, and one at the upper end of causeway, on the Cambridge side;" and that Messrs. Leonard Jarvis, John Derby, and Jonathan L. Austin be a committee to procure a model for said houses, and to determine the size of them, and when they should be built." At a meeting held October 9, 1793, it was voted "that Z. Whiting be directed to raise one or both draws every Saturday, to remain open on Sunday." And the President was requested "to publish in the Saturday Centinel such vote, and the purpose for which it was passed. And that any one of the workmen who shall ask or receive any toll upon the bridge, shall be forthwith discharged from any future service upon the same."

October 23, 1793, the Directors voted "to choose by ballot two toll gatherers; and upon counting the votes, it appeared that Isaac Wyman was chosen for the Boston, and Joseph Brown for the Cambridge side." At the next meeting they balloted for an assistant toll gatherer, and upon sorting the votes it was found that David Knapp was chosen for that place." At the same meeting it was voted "that a dinner be provided for the workmen on the day of opening, and that the bridge be decorated." On the 20th of November, 1793, it was ordered "that the bridge be opened on Saturday next; and that the clerk advertise the same in all the papers, three weeks successively." The clerk was

also ordered "to advertise in all the western papers that the bridge is completed, and ready for the accommodation of travellers, and cause handbills of the same to be posted in all the taverns westward and northward." In the newspapers of the day, published in Boston, the following notices respecting the bridge appeared:—

*Chronicle, September 30, 1793.*

WEST BOSTON BRIDGE.—The last pier of this extraordinary and beautifully constructed piece of machinery, was drove on Thursday last. It is expected that it will be finished by the middle of November next, when we are told that the bridge will be opened in due form. The elegance of the workmanship, the convenience and economy in the construction, is thought to be the greatest master-piece of mechanical ingenuity, that was ever executed in this country.

*Columbian Centinel, November 27, 1793.*

THE BRIDGE at West Boston was opened to passengers, &c., on Saturday last. The elegance of the workmanship, and the magnitude of the undertaking, are perhaps unequalled in the history of enterprises. We hope the proprietors will not suffer pecuniary loss from their public spirit. They have a claim on the liberality and patronage of the government, and to these claims government will not be inattentive.

*Chronicle, November 27, 1793.*

THE WEST BOSTON BRIDGE was opened on Saturday last for passengers. This bridge for length, elegance and grandeur, is not exceeded by any in the United States, if in any part of the world.

At the next meeting of the Directory, Mr. Samuel Parkman was requested to prepare the regulations for the tollmen and watchmen. Mr. Parkman drew up the regulations as requested, and they are so characteristic of the precision and thoroughness with which business was done by our fathers, that they are given entire.

ARTICLE 1. "The tollmen shall attend on their respective sides every morning at sunrise, and continue 'till 10 o'clock at night, excepting such time as they are relieved by the watchmen, and they are not to leave their stand 'till they are relieved."

ARTICLE 2. "That there shall be only one tollman on Sundays, who shall be placed on the Boston side, and shall receive the customary toll from all persons coming off the bridge, as well as going on."

ARTICLE 3. "That the tollman on the Cambridge side shall be relieved *precisely* at 7 o'clock, every morning, and shall be allowed half an hour to get his breakfast and count the money he took the preceding day, which he is to wrap up in a paper, and mark it with his name, and the day it was taken, and send it by the

watchman with his book to the tollman on the Boston side, who is to carry it with his own money to the Treasurer."

ARTICLE 4. "The tollman on the Cambridge side to be relieved *precisely* at 1 o'clock, and allowed half an hour to get his dinner, and half an hour at 8 o'clock for supper."

ARTICLE 5th prescribes the duty of the tollman on the Boston side, differing but little from the other.

ARTICLE 6. "That two watchmen shall be appointed, whose duty it shall be to clean, trim, and light the lamps; to relieve the tollmen at breakfast, dinner, and supper, precisely at the time mentioned in their duty; to receive the toll when they are absent, and pay to them on their return; to watch on the bridge from 10 o'clock in the evening, 'till sunrise, and receive the toll of all passengers in the night, and pay the same to the tollmen in the morning; to assist in raising the draw, and sweeping the bridge. That there shall be one constantly on guard, whose stand shall be on the Boston side, but in good weather shall walk backward and forward on the bridge, to prevent any injury or disturbance which may happen; and there shall be two suitable poles provided for the watchmen's defence, to be always carried by them when on guard, and to be used when necessary; the watchmen to relieve each other as often as the weather makes it necessary."

Notwithstanding the exactness of these regulations, yet the venerable tollman, Moses Hadley, who was ap-

pointed as assistant in the year 1803, obeyed them to the satisfaction of the Corporation while it existed, and subsequently to the approbation of the Directors of the Hancock Free Bridge Corporation, who retained him for his worth and faithfulness until the freedom of the bridge. He was employed on the bridge in all nearly fifty-five years.

Commencement Day at that time was more of "an occasion" than at present. It was a very busy day with the bridge. Every year the Treasurer or some other persons was authorized to employ extra assistants to take toll on Commencement day; and to "order all the toll gatherers from the Boston to the Cambridge side, after 4 o'clock, P. M., for the collection of tolls both ways; this to be done only on said days."

The tollmen were forbidden by a vote "to credit any person for more than one week, unless they held themselves responsible for any deficiency." It also appears that the bridge for some reason had become a great thoroughfare during the Sabbath, for it was voted July 11, 1796, "that the toll-gatherers attend on the Boston side every Sunday, after public service in the afternoon, from April 1 to October 1."

It is clear that rogues and persons disposed to mischief were extant at that period; for a communication from one of the tollmen, informs the Directors "that on the evening of February 10, 1796, *four sleys* ran by me and would not pay their toll." Unluckily for the culprits, the tollmen had ascertained the names of two of

them, and the Treasurer was ordered to prosecute them forthwith. That officer was also ordered to "commence an action against the Proprietor of Hack, No. 44, for passing the Bridge, in two instances, without paying toll." The Treasurer was also ordered "to offer a reward of *Thirty Dollars* for the discovery of any person or persons concerned in breaking any of the lamps on the Bridge or Causeway."

The Directors looked after their servants, and they inform one of the Tollmen, "that a complaint has been made to them of his neglecting to receive the toll on the Boston side, and leaving the collection of the toll on Thanksgiving day to a lamplighter; and that if any similar complaints are made, the Directors will advertise for another toll-gatherer."

At the next meeting, February 9, 1798, it was *voted* to put in the Mercury and Centinel the following advertisement: "Wanted, a Tollman for West Boston Bridge; any person desirous of undertaking it is requested to apply for further particulars of Mungo Mackay, Esq., the Treasurer." Whether this advertisement was in consequence of the delinquencies of the before-mentioned tollmen, the records do not say. The assistant tollman, about the same time, gets into trouble of another kind, for he communicates to the Board, "that a certain Rheuben White, of Boston, butcher, had abused and assaulted him, the said toll-gatherer, when in the performance of his duty," and the Treasurer was directed to prosecute the pugna-



cious butcher. In 1799 Nathaniel Phillips, Jr., was elected tollman, and the Treasurer was desired "to inform said Phillips of his appointment, and to take *good bonds, properly executed*; point out his duty, and see him sworn to the faithful performance of his trust." More formality is not now used to install a Governor of the Commonwealth.

There is a peculiarity in the mode of paying the tollmen, which is hardly explicable. The Directors voted, that the annual salary of the principal tollmen should be \$333.33. Afterward, it was *voted* that a *grant* be made to the principal tollmen of \$166.66 in addition to this salary; and frequently it would be ordered "that in consideration of their *faithful services*, and the high price of provisions and fuel, the sum of \$50 be given to the tollmen as a *gratuity*." These donations, though probably made in the first place with no intention of having them continued, were voted regularly each year, and therefore, what with the *salary*, the *grant*, and the *gratuity*, the tollmen obtained a very respectable income.

About the time that the accounts for constructing the Bridge were settled, the following vote was passed:—

"That the Treasurer pay to Messrs. Shed & Page three Pounds, and make no charge against them, for *rum*, furnished them when they *had no beer*, for the workmen, and for breakage of crockery and other

utensils, in full compensation for their demands against the Proprietors, and take their receipt in full."

From certain bills approved by the Directors, it is clear that they sometimes partook of "refreshments;" and the suspicion is well founded that they went so far as even to indulge in a "hot supper;" for, occasionally, Mr. James Vila, at whose house the Directors sometimes held their meetings, (near the place now known as Concert Hall), would render an account of five Pounds or more; and later, Mr. Mountain, of Mountain's Hotel, would submit bills of similar nature. It should, however, be said that these items were never extravagant, and that the affairs of the Corporation, as indicated by the action of the Directors, were managed with the strictest economy. For instance, on one occasion, it was *voted*: —

"That William Spooner and Mungo Mackay be appointed a Committee, for the purpose of *contracting* with lamplighters, and to *make a calculation* of the quantity of *Oyl* necessary for lighting the lamps, and to secure against the *unnecessary waste of Oyl*." Again, the Clerk was instructed "to notify the Directors each month, in alphabetical order, to superintend the Bridge," and each Director was requested to "keep a *journal* of his *observations* and *services*." It was voted that the Treasurer "sell one of the gondaloes, and ye flatt, together with the lathe," and that he "pay no more *monies* unless by written order of the Director of the month."

Soon after the Bridge was opened, during the year 1794, Messrs. Sullivan, Blake and Austin were made a committee "to apply to the General Court for permission to double the tolls on foot passengers." Subsequently, the same committee were requested "to procure a report of the committee upon the same, in favor of it, and that if it should appear to *labor* in the House, that Mr. Blake "be requested to move it may lie over to the next session."

They petitioned the Legislature in 1795 that, after a certain day "the tolls might be taken in cents instead of pence, and that broad wheels might pay a less toll than narrow wheels." This movement in favor of reduced tolls on "*broad wheels*" seems to have been a favorite scheme of the Directors, for they are continually pressing its importance before the General Court. The tolls were not altered from shillings and pence to cents, until after the Bridge became the property of the Hancock Free Bridge Corporation.

During the years 1799 and 1800, the proprietary saw its darkest days. Extensive repairs were required, as the original piles of the bridge were of pine, and were in a few years nearly destroyed by worms, and had to be replaced by others of oak. Still they were careful to order Messrs. Dunn, Spooner and Dennie, "to repair the bridge as fast as can be done, *consistent* with *economy* and *prudence*." After considering the expediency of making a grant to widen Cambridge Street, they concluded "that it would be unwise under the circumstances of

the bridge." The Treasurer's report exhibited the fact that "the toll received, was *insufficient* for the repairs," and the corporation had to borrow money for that purpose. In view of this disastrous state of things, a committee was sent to the General Court to ask for power to raise tolls; but the Legislature, deaf to their entreaties, refused their application. The Directors were ordered to persist in their endeavors to gain the consent of the Legislature "for an increase of the toll," and also "to ask for any further aid which might be beneficial to the proprietary;" and again they petition for a "grant of the bridge in fee to the present proprietors and their successors." Afterward they appoint a committee to "request a grant of the *perpetuity* of the bridge." For some reason, it may have been their poverty, the bridge appears not to have been kept in good repair, for the Board receives an application for damages from John Ridgway, on account "of the accident he sustained in passing the bridge, by his horse *slumping* through." And Messrs. Dunn and Mackay were authorised to "allow Ridgway such compensation as they thought proper." It seems that pleasure wagons and military companies were a source of inconvenience and trouble to the bridge, for there was a united movement by the several Bridge Corporations in the year 1815, to obtain from the Legislature permission to "increase the toll on pleasure wagons," and again they assert their preference for broad rimmed wheels, by asking a distinction of rates in their favor. And some years later there

was concerted action on the part of the bridges, "to devise means for remedying the inconvenience now suffered from Military Companies forming and firing on the bridges, and marching over the same with martial *music*."

The war of 1812, though unpopular in this vicinity, was of some service to this bridge, as the Directors received from the "Board of War" the sum of \$118, for the use of the bridge "for soldiers, baggage, &c."

The notices of the Proprietors Annual Meetings, and other matters of publication, had appeared from the organization of the Corporation, in the columns of the Columbian Centinel, previously Mercury and Centinel, and the New England Palladium, but about the year 1814, we find them inserted in the Boston Daily Advertiser, and Boston Courier in 1824.

In 1825, a committee was appointed "to consider the expediency of lowering the bridge and causeway, and causing the same to be filled with gravel," and to see "whether the same would not entitle them to an extension of the Charter."

This great improvement has been accomplished by the Hancock Free Bridge Corporation, at the same time that it has freed the Bridge within twenty years of the term of the old charter.

In 1830, Royal Makepeace, Esq., who has done much for the prosperity of Cambridge, applied to the Board "for the liberty to use part of the Bridge for a Railroad." The application was refused; but the project

started twenty-eight years ago, by that enterprising citizen, has since been successfully achieved, and added much to the comfort and convenience of our people.

But altogether the most interesting portion of the history of the "Body Politic" we are now reciting, is the account of the contests and controversies with parties advocating schemes which were considered adverse to its interests, and the enterprises undertaken by itself which, though originating in a desire to increase the travel over the Bridge, and enhance its property, also tended to benefit the public.

These contests engaged the attention, and commanded the services of the Directors at every period in the life of the Corporation, commencing in its infancy, when it was proposed to connect Boston and Roxbury with a bridge, and continued against the petitions for the Canal Bridge—for the Warren Free Bridge, for the construction of a road from the Mill Dam to Watertown, until the existence of the Corporation closed by the disposition of its franchise to the Hancock Free Bridge Corporation after having earnestly contended against its creation.

In 1796, an order of notice was issued by the Legislature to the Corporation, "to show cause, if any existed, why the petition of Robert Pierpoint to build a Bridge from Boston to Pierpoint's Farm, in Roxbury, should not be granted." At the Proprietor's meeting that year, it was voted "That upon every calculation which can reasonably be made, the building a Bridge

from Boston to Sewall's Point, in Brookline, will deprive the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge of all hope of a reimbursement of the expense of that work, and will essentially injure the Public, because it will be impracticable to keep both Bridges in repair by the Income arising from travelling over them."

The Directors memorialized the Legislature, stating "They by no means intend to oppose any measure wherein the Public Good is so much involved as that it will form a Balance to the Private injury which individuals must suffer. When the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge petitioned for an act of incorporation, it was granted, with restrictions, that they should build a Bridge from Boston over to Pelham's Island—this was because they should otherwise have built the same where a greater part of the travelling would have been taken from *Charles River Bridge*, and where one-third of the expense would have been saved." They ask "that the same regard be shown for their Interest as was shown to the Proprietors of that Bridge." They conclude by submitting to their Honors "whether there can be such a Public Necessity for another Bridge as to induce an Act of Incorporation to the utter destruction of all *Emolument* from and the *Privation* of a first *Reimbursement* to the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge."

They determined to oppose the prayer of the petition "by all the means in their power," and appointed

“*five agents to attend* on the General Court, or its committee, to support the rights of the Corporation;” authorising said committee, which consisted of James Sullivan, Leonard Jarvis, Geo. R. Minot, Aaron Dexter, and William Spooner, “to employ *Council learned in the law*, and take any other means which they may think proper” to defeat the object of the petitioners.

That certainly was not only a strong memorial which they sent up to the General Court, but it was a very imposing array of gentlemen who accompanied it. And with such influential “agents,” it is not to be wondered at, that Mr. Pierpoint had “leave to withdraw.”

If this practice is what is now known as “lobbying,” this corporation “*lobbied*” pretty extensively. By their “*Committees*,” “Agents,” or “Council,” they were before the Legislature at nearly every session. By the Treasurer’s account, it appears that seventy-five dollars on one occasion was paid to Hon. Harrison Gray Otis—and one hundred dollars on another was paid to Rufus G. Amory, for “advice, and attending a committee of the General Court,” and William Sullivan was employed at one time as their “agent” at the Legislature.

In the year 1804, petitions for the incorporation of the Canal Bridge came before the Legislature, and the proprietors informed that body that to grant said petition, “would be highly injurious and *detrimental* to their interests, and as the original proprietors of West Boston Bridge were refused leave by the Hon’l the General Court, to erect their Bridge from Baldwin’s Point



to Lechmere Point, they *particularly* consider that to grant the petitions of Joseph Barrell and others, and William Tudor and others, would be an act of great injustice, and a direct violation of their charter."

Council were, as a matter of course, employed, and a Committee of *seven*, consisting of Samuel Parkman, William Spooner, Mungo Mackay, Samuel Dunn, Thomas Dennie, Rufus G. Amory, and Gardner Greene, were appointed "*to attend all the meetings* of the General Court respecting the petitions for a Bridge over Charles River."

In the year 1796, the Corporation granted thirty dollars for a road survey to Mendon, and agreed to confer with a Committee of the House "on the subject of laying out a road" to that place. In 1800, they received a letter from Seth Hastings, of Mendon, which stated "That the towns of Milford, Holliston, Natick, and Newton, were desirous of shortening and repairing the Road which passes from Mendon through these towns over Watertown Bridge to West Boston Bridge, and to put it in such order as to induce travellers to come that way in preference to the new Turnpike Road from Dedham to Boston."

The Directors ordered a committee to draw on the Treasurer to the amount of one hundred and fifty dollars for the above purpose if they should deem it to be for the interest of the Corporation.

No opportunity was neglected by them by which the travelling community could be made to "pay toll at

their gate." They aided in public improvements, built and bought Turnpikes, and assisted in the construction of roads and bridges in order to bring about that desirable end.

They gave Royal Makepeace property valued at one thousand dollars, as a contribution to him for building a road from the causeway of the West Boston Bridge, to the Ship Tavern in Menotomy, now West Cambridge.

Five hundred dollars were given to Brigham and Makepeace, to build a hotel in Cambridgeport.

Some "old timber" which they had on hand was voted to Charles Bulfinch "for the purpose of making a new street at the bottom of the Common toward the Bridge," it being given as the "subscription of the Corporation to that object."

This was Charles Street, and Mr. Bulfinch finished it in 1807. It led from Pleasant Street to the Bridge, and the Directors had fifty-five feet of railing taken down for the benefit of the travellers on the "New Street," and they allowed foot passengers to pass the Bridge into town from the Boston side free of toll; this was done to accommodate members of the Third Baptist Society — since more familiarly known as the Rev. Dr. Sharp's.

In 1805, they "took measures to fill up with earth the space between the Bridge and the upland on the Boston side; and made such conveyance of their lands as would advance the project of Wm. Appleton and

Wm. Walker in filling up the flats on the south side of the Bridge.”

A survey was ordered “to ascertain the distance from the State House, in Boston, through Waltham to Wheeler’s Tavern, in Framingham, and from thence toward Boston, on the Worcester Turnpike, to Mitchell’s Tavern; from thence by Brighton Meeting House over the contemplated Bridge to the “Old State House.” This survey was ordered to see if the travel could be diverted from the Worcester Turnpike to the West Boston Bridge; and it must have been a feasible project, for they appropriated five thousand dollars towards the construction of a road over the river “in a direct line to the Market House in Brighton,” and applied five thousand dollars as a fund to keep said road in repair.

In 1810, they procured an Act of the Legislature which enabled them to “sell and exchange their real estate.”

It was signed by Christopher Gore, then Governor of the State, Harrison Gray Otis, then President of the Senate, and Timothy Bigelow Speaker of the House.

They voted to assist a Company to the amount of five hundred dollars, in case they should raise the sum of fifteen hundred dollars, to establish a market house near Taft’s Tavern, in Brighton.

They paid one thousand dollars for a portion of the Middlesex Turnpike, and subscribed two hundred and thirty dollars to build a road from Newton Meeting House to Watertown Bridge.

But the great enterprise, as well as the greatest controversy in which the Corporation was engaged, was in connection with the project to build a "Turnpike from Cambridge to Watertown."

The project was started in self defense. The Boston and Roxbury Mill Dam Corporation, in the year 1822, applied to the Court of Sessions for the County of Middlesex, for a road from Western Avenue, through the grounds of the United States Arsenal, to Watertown. Immediately a Committee was appointed to oppose this application, consisting of John Odin, Gardner Greene, W. H. Eliot, and Heman Lincoln. The next year the controversy was carried to the General Court. The West Boston Bridge had conferred with other corporations, and induced a general opposition; and as usual it was represented by "counsel and committees" of great ability and character. Finding matters going adversely, they proposed to the Mill Dam Corporation a compromise offering to make "a road with them on the *north* side of the Arsenal to a certain tree on the south side of the river." This compromise was declined. In this juncture the Corporation sought the aid of a higher power, they forwarded to the Hon. James Lloyd, then Senator at Congress, (afterward a Director in the Corporation,) "a plan of the survey of the land through which said road was to pass," requesting him to lay the same before the War Department. A Memorial was also drawn up by William Phillips and Aaron Dex-

ter, intended for Congress, and the Secretary of War, on the subject of a road through land of the United States Arsenal, at Watertown, and the Treasurer, Mr. Lincoln, was despatched with the document to Washington. After that gentleman returned, it was voted at a meeting of the Directors "That letters be addressed to the Hon. Messrs. Lloyd, Webster, and Fuller, requesting them, if, on the whole, they considered it expedient, and were of the opinion that such a measure would be successful, to present to Congress, the Memorial of the Corporation, and of sundry inhabitants of Cambridgeport, praying the interposition of that body, to prevent the construction of the Watertown Turnpike, and requesting the Honorable gentlemen to use their exertions to promote the success of the application." But their arduous endeavors proved of no avail; and after battling zealously in the County Court, in the State Legislature, and the National Congress against the measure, the Corporation changed its tactics, and began on the principle of "fighting fire with fire," by petitioning the Legislature for leave to build a new road to Watertown themselves. Leave was granted by the Legislature, subject to the final action of the Court of Sessions for Middlesex. Hon. S. P. P. Fay was employed as "Agent" to procure from the Court an acceptance of the report of the locating committee, and it was voted to request Mr. Fuller, (then Member

of Congress,) “to use his exertions and influence to promote the same object.” The report was accepted, and the road was built at a cost of about \$36,000, \$5,000 of which was contributed by persons in Cambridgeport.

At a meeting held Oct. 1, 1824, the Hon. Mr. Lloyd submitted the following vote which was passed unanimously:—

*Voted*, “That in giving a conveyance of the house fronting on Watertown Square, a reservation if practicable be made, of the right of the corporation, to take the clapboards off the southern side thereof, adjoining or near the road; and to sheath the same with planed matched boards from the western to the eastern side of the house between the sills of the chamber windows and the caps of the first floor windows, and to have painted, and hereafter to keep painted thereon, in large and thick letters, as the space will admit, the following words:—

“*The nearest road to Boston.*”

The terms demanded as a consideration for this privilege were so exorbitant, that the Corporation declined them, and then ordered that “an arch be built of large size, and somewhat similar to that on the Worcester Turnpike, near the Punch Bowl, with the following label on the top, viz:—

“*By ACTUAL MEASUREMENT the SHORTEST and the MOST LEVEL road to Faneuil Hall Market, in Boston.*”

Whether or not the arch was considered too ornamental, or the label too strongly stated, is not known, but for some reason the Corporation concluded on a somewhat less conspicuous announcement, and appointed a committee "who should cause to be erected a suitable *sign-board*, stating the distance to Boston, with such other facts as they might deem proper." The following vote was passed after the controversy was ended:—

*Voted*, "That the thanks of the Directors be presented to the Hon. Daniel Webster for his services rendered to the agent of this Corporation at Washington, during the last winter, and that the Secretary transmit a copy of the vote," &c.

In the year 1828, the Legislature considered the subject of purchasing all the Bridges over Charles River, for the purpose of freeing them before their charters would legally expire. It led to a prolonged controversy; one, in which the entire relations between the public interest, and the rights of Corporations established by the Legislature received essential modification. The doctrine of "vested rights" was strongly assailed and nearly, if not completely, overthrown.

But though the West Boston Bridge Corporation naturally objected to be deprived of the benefits of the Charter, which had been for some time, and would continue to be, considerable, yet the records clearly show

that they were ever disposed to regard the public interest in this matter. In the year above mentioned, when they received a communication from a Committee of the Legislature respecting a purchase of their property, the Directors reported to the Proprietors that "a sale to the Commonwealth be recommended of the Charter at its fair value." The State did not then act on the subject.

In 1836, the same proposition was before the Legislature, and again the Directors vote, "that in a spirit of compromise, and with a desire to meet the wishes of the public, they will advise and recommend the stockholders to sell their property to the Commonwealth at a reasonable discount from its fair value."

They however opposed the granting of the petition for the incorporation of the Hancock Free Bridge, which was then before the House.

The petitioners for that Bridge, desired an Act which would enable them either to build a new Bridge over Charles River, at some point between Canal and West Boston Bridges, or to purchase one or both of these Bridges for the purpose of making them free. The directors instructed a committee to attend the Legislature, and "oppose said petition, and rebut the injurious statements contained therein."

The Petitioners, however, obtained a charter, one clause of which provided for an appraisal of the Canal and West Boston Bridges; and the Proprietors of the



latter agreed "to sell their Franchise and Bridge to the Hancock Free Bridge Corporation, according to the terms of the Act of Incorporation establishing said Company."

They selected one of the three appraisers, and notified that Company that they had complied with the terms of the Act authorising the sale. After the appraisal was made, the Directors received from the Hancock Free Bridge Corporation a communication inquiring of them whether they would convey their property in accordance with the appraisal?" To which they replied, "that the subject would be laid before the next meeting of the Proprietors, and in the mean time they have no hesitation in the belief that the Proprietors will at all times be ready to conform to the requisitions of the law." But the Hancock Free Bridge Company owing to the general pecuniary distress which was prevalent in the year 1836, was unable to raise the money by which to conclude the purchase of the Bridge, and the scheme failed for the time.

In the year 1842, the State agitated the subject again, and the Hon. Henry Wilson, then a member of the Legislature, in behalf of a committee, of which he was Chairman, again inquired of this Corporation on what terms they would sell their Bridge and Franchise.

A meeting of the Proprietors was called to consider this communication, and they voted to reply "that the

Company had ever been willing to sell their franchise and corporate property, on fair and equitable terms, to be determined by persons not interested. That as descendants of the original Proprietors, they felt compelled to state that the Bridge was erected at great expense; that after its completion it was believed that the public convenience and interest of the Proprietors would be promoted by making a road to Watertown, and purchasing the Middlesex Turnpike, making it a free road; which was done by the Proprietors. To effect these objects, the Corporation had created a heavy debt, in discharge of which, and keeping the road and Bridge in repair, most of the income was absorbed, until within the last ten years, during which time, they had received a net income of about thirteen thousand dollars. The Proprietors indulged the hope that for the remainder of the term of their charter, they might have enjoyed the income received by tolls from the Bridge in accordance with the expectation of those who undertook the enterprise. They make this reply to meet the Legislature in the spirit of conciliation, the Proprietors or a portion of them being fully aware, by past experience, that it is in the power of the Legislature to reduce if not destroy their property by granting other charters, if in their wisdom they deem the public convenience requires such legislation."

The Committee reported a bill for the purchase by

the Commonwealth of the Canal Bridge ; and a resolve for the appointment of a commission for the appraisal of the West Boston Bridge, to report to the next Legislature. But the bill and resolve failed to become a law, and again the project met with a defeat.

In the year 1846, the Hancock Free Bridge Corporation received a second charter from the Legislature, empowering it to purchase the two Bridges, and the franchise thereof, of the Corporations which owned them, and to maintain them as toll bridges, until a fund of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars should be raised, after repaying the subscribers their stock, with six per cent. interest, and paying all expenses. Then this fund of \$150,000 was to be paid to the State, for which sum the State was to keep the bridges free forever.

Under this charter an appraisal of the West Boston Bridge was made, it being valued at \$75,000. At a meeting of the Proprietors, held June 24, 1846, three hundred and four shares were represented, and the following vote passed :—

“ That the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge do accept the award of the referees appointed under an Act incorporating the Hancock Free Bridge Company ; the vote was adopted by every Proprietor present voting in the affirmative, except Dr. Bell, who voted in the negative—he owned two shares.”

The price agreed upon for Canal Bridge was \$60,-

000. The Hancock Free Bridge Corporation then purchased the Bridges, in accordance with their charter.

The organization of the company was as follows :

*President*,— ISAAC LIVERMORE. *Directors*,— Willard Phillips, James Hayward, Josiah Coolidge, Charles Valentine, Charles Davenport, William Fisk, Sam'l P. Allen, Walter R. Mason. *Treasurer*,— Andrew G. Hammond. *Clerk*,— Richard H. Dana, Jr.

The number of Directors was subsequently reduced to seven. Isaac Livermore has been President, and Willard Phillips and Josiah Coolidge have been Directors, from the first organization of the Corporation to the present time.

The Act of Incorporation was so amended in the year 1857, as to allow the city of Cambridge, on receiving a fund of \$100,000, to take the bridges instead of the Commonwealth, and maintain them as free avenues forever.

On Saturday, the 30th day of January, 1858, it was announced that the tolls would cease on that day. The demonstration which took place on the following Monday, showed how thorough and universal was the satisfaction of the community at this intelligence.

They evinced their joy by such means as generally characterize scenes of national jubilation. The public buildings, and the dwellings of private citizens were decorated, and many of them were illuminated in the evening, when there was also a display of fire-

works. A procession, of more than a mile in length, embracing all classes and interests, was formed at the Athenaeum, (now City Hall,) and proceeded over West Boston Bridge, to Bowdoin Square in Boston, through Green and Leverett streets, over Canal Bridge to the Common in Old Cambridge, and then to the place of starting. On each of the Bridges, the procession halted, and the President of the Hancock Free Bridge Corporation formally surrendered them, respectively, to the Mayor of Cambridge, as the representative of that City. In the procession was the only remaining relic of over sixty years of toll, in the person of the venerable Moses Hadley.

When the custody of the Bridges was placed in the City, and the Hon. John Sargent as Mayor, accepted the charge, and in the name of the good city, proclaimed them "free forever," the multitude shouted with an enthusiasm which indicated that their delight was heartfelt and sincere.

The Canal Bridge, connecting Boston with Lechmere Point, now East Cambridge, was opened for travel in August, 1809, at which time Cambridge Street, leading from the Point to the Colleges was also opened as a public highway. Before Canal Bridge was built, the Point was reached by a narrow road or way, extending from Cambridgeport in a northeasterly direction by the old dwelling house of the late Andrew Boardman. Before Canal Bridge was commenced there was but

one dwelling house on the Point ; it was occupied by two brothers named Russell, who used nearly all the land for farming purposes. East Cambridge now contains upwards of six thousand inhabitants, and is one of the most thriving portions of the City.

It will be seen from the foregoing statements that the growth of Cambridge has been intimately connected with the existence of its bridges. And we can have no better idea of the value of the latter to us, than by comparing the condition of Cambridge, as it was when the West Boston Bridge was built, with its condition at the time when, it was dedicated to the public, as a free avenue.

Cambridge, was originally settled under the name of *Newtown*, with the intention of making it the "Metropolis of the Province of Massachusetts."

From a brief but interesting history of Cambridge, written in the year 1800, by the Rev. Dr. Holmes, we learn that "in 1631, the ordnance and munition was removed to Newtown, and in some of the first years the annual election for the Governor and magistrates of the Colony was holden in this town." Also, "that the General Court sat there." The same history states, "It is generally conceded that the town eminently combines the tranquility of philosophic solitude, with the choicest pleasures and advantages of refined society." Until the year 1807, in Cambridge, was included Menotomy, now West Cambridge, and

Little Cambridge, now Brighton. It was divided into three Parishes; the present City was the first Parish, West Cambridge was the second, and Brighton the third Parish. In October, 1798, the number of inhabitants in the three Parishes was 2445. The number of houses in the first Parish was 148, in the second, 85, in the third, 68. Dr. Holmes also tells us that the "West Boston Bridge is a magnificent structure," that "it cost \$76,000, and when lighted by its two rows of lamps, extending a mile and a quarter, presents a vista, which has a fine effect." And adds that "the erection of the West Boston Bridge has had a perceptible influence on the trade of Cambridge, which formerly was very inconsiderable. By bringing the travel from the westward and northward, through the centre of the town, it has greatly invigorated business there. It, at the same time, has given rise to a thriving trade in the vicinity of the Bridge, where several houses and stores have already been built, and where a rapid progress in trade and commerce can rationally be expected."

It was the general expectation at that time, that the portion of Cambridge lying near the Bridge would be a prominent seat of trade, and a mart for commerce.

This is not only probable by the statement of those who actually indulged these views, but it is evident from the provisions of an Act passed in 1793, for the

benefit of the Proprietors of the West Boston Bridge. The Act gave them power to "open, cut, construct, and maintain such ditches, canals, and drains, over, through, and across the marsh or upland, on each side of the way or road," which they were obliged by a previous Act to make. The Act contained a provision limiting the width which such ditches, canals, &c., with the road, should be made, and then gave the Proprietors power to take lands of other people for the aforesaid purpose ; providing with great care for the settlement of the damages which might result to those from whom the corporation took land, making "the *Bodies* of the Proprietors liable to be taken on execution of judgment against them."

If that liability was attendant upon the members of corporations in our times, who fail to meet their engagements, it might lead to some unpleasant results, and it certainly must have been considered very good security for a debt, where the "Bodies" of Chief Justice Dana, Governor Sullivan, Oliver Wendell, and Christopher Gore, "could be taken on execution" in default of payment.

Clearly, from the Act above quoted, it was the intention of the Proprietors to make extensive improvements, with the idea of establishing that locality as a commercial point. There seemed to be a good ground for this expectation ; already a good business had been started, much of the trade with the farming popula-



tion, the barter of wood, and hay, and the produce of the soil, for the domestic commodities, was carried on in Cambridge. And this fact, among, others gave rise to the great anticipations of the period. No better information can be obtained of what was the real condition of Cambridge then, and what was the popular notion that it would become, than is conveyed by the following extract of a letter to one of our citizens, from a person who had embarked in the speculations of that time, and from the tenor of whose letter, one would judge had failed to meet with the success that his energy and enterprise demanded.

“Cambridgeport,” he says, “was one of the first enterprises of the people under the Constitution of the United States, and its successful progress in the outset, was in accordance with the prosperity of the country under the impetus given to it by the first administration of the new Government. But competitors soon arose in the form of new improvements, which attracted the public mind, and drew away the nourishment which sustained Cambridgeport, and dispensed it among such a number of hungry claimants, that disappointment and starvation, like a pestilence and famine, spread over the better of our new enterprises, with a rapidity equalled only by the headlong infatuation which had driven the projectors into the pits and snares they had laid for others. Few who took any part in these miscalled splendid enterprises, escaped the general deluge.

“West Boston Bridge brought into existence Cambridgeport, and before it had time for any substantial maturity, clouds and darkness portended its fate. South Boston, Canal Bridge, and the Mill Dam, followed in rapid succession, all expecting to derive their support from the same source, which had cherished the little settlement of Cambridgeport, the trade of the county, and the sale of lands to actual settlers.

“The division of travel which was produced by opening these avenues, so diffused the sources of business, that no attractions for trade was formed upon any of the new avenues, and the principal encouragement which had sustained the old ones, ceased to exist, so that in a very short time, all the trade and business, which had been carried on outside the city of Boston, was concentrated within it. . . . Thus ended the first splendid race of competition in the suburbs of Boston.”

“At the time West Boston Bridge was opened for travel, which was in the autumn of 1793, the lands, now Cambridgeport, were comprised mainly in three farms, owned by Leonard Jarvis, Francis Dana, and Andrew Boardman, a few parcels or small tracts by John Foxcraft, William Watson, and Samuel Manning, and numerous strips of marsh land by non-residents, principally belonging to farmers, in what was then Menotomy, now West Cambridge.”

“There was an old farm house on the Jarvis Farm

called the 'Inman House,' a small house called the 'Sowden House' on Judge Dana's land, near the west end of Brighton Bridge, and a small house on the Boardman Farm. These, I believe, were all the buildings at that time upon the whole road. Vose and Makepeace built the first store, and first dwelling-house, opposite each other on the causeway, the former in the autumn of 1793, and the latter in 1795. Mr. Jarvis built a large tavern adjoining the above store, with stablings, &c., in the year 1794" . . . . . "with the exception of two stores near those above mentioned, few improvements were made until after the Jarvis estate was sold in lots and parcels by the United States Marshal. From this period, rapid improvements were made, and in a few years a handsome village sprang up in a manner quite novel in that age." He then alludes to the embargo measures which characterized the administration of Jefferson, as being the cause of the prostration of this agreeable condition of affairs.

"This horrid calamity," he continues, referring to the embargo, "palsied the energies of this thrifty village, and produced a torpor and protracted debility, which all her efforts could never shake off. The expenditures for improvements had anticipated the wants of continued prosperity, which by this fatal apathy was rendered worthless and useless, thereby greatly diminishing the aliment of recuperation, vigor, and activity. In January, 1805, an Act of Congress made

this place a port of Delivery, and from which it derived the name of Cambridgeport. Anticipation looked forward to its becoming a commercial place, and the borders of Charles River the depot of its active operations. Roads and Canals were formed for its accomodation at great expense, and wharves to some extent were actually constructed. An earthquake could have been but little less destructive to these enterprises than was the embargo." Such was the testimony of one who had good opportunity to know from his own experience, what was hoped, and what was realised from the early settlement of Cambridgeport. His opinion as to the anticipations of the time, are substantiated by the old plans of the place which exist, which have in them reservations for Court Buildings; for the most extensive market privileges, and so far as paper could do it, exhibited all the features and facilities of a populous city. Many who are now living remember the numerous teams, which stood in front of the stores and in the Tavern yards of Cambridgeport, with their loads, waiting for purchasers, and the launch of a schooner from an embryo Cambridgeport shipyard.

Undoubtedly, as the writer of the letter from which we have taken extracts asserts, rival speculations, con-temperaneous with the settlement of Cambridgeport, had a deleterous influence upon it, and distracted from it the elements and sources of prosperity. The embargo which struck down the entire commerce of

New England, and prostrated its industrial energies, fell heavily upon the rising prosperity of the place; but it is also certain that the erection of the Bridge, by facilitating the communication with Boston, necessarily afforded that city greater opportunity to draw towards it the larger share of the country trade; that trade on which the Port depended for its growth and subsistence. If the non-intercourse acts had never passed, it is very doubtful whether any part of Cambridge would have ever been distinguished as an emporium of commerce. Had that been withheld, her shipyards would hardly have rivalled the deep water accommodations of East Boston, or her wharves have afforded the advantages possessed by those which run out into the waters of the harbor.

But Cambridge recovered from the depression which affected her, as it did all the Atlantic communities, and has made since then, a steady and healthy progress.

The principal portion of the trade which was formerly carried on in Cambridge, has been transferred to the city of Boston, yet Cambridge still retains as citizens many of those who were formerly her traders, and the narrow limits of Boston being filled by an increased trade, numbers of its worthiest citizens were driven to the country for residences, and Cambridge has received its full share of the benefits of such emigration; and although Cambridge has lost her second and third par-

ishes, which contained more than half of her former territory, yet thus dismembered, the number of her inhabitants has greatly increased since the time of the erection of the Bridges, and her population at the present time exceeds twenty thousand.

In 1846, Cambridge was organized as a city, under a charter from the Legislature, and this new form of government has proved generally satisfactory. By a recent purchase of the Athenæum building, ample accommodations have been obtained for all the city offices in a central location, and we have now a City Hall, obtained at a moderate cost, which will meet the wants of the city for many years to come, whilst the citizens will receive all the benefits which were expected to be derived from the continuance of the Athenæum, the city having taken the Library, and agreed to maintain it forever for the benefit of the citizens of Cambridge.

It is a source of much satisfaction to be able to state that the executors of the will of the late Thomas Dowse, Esq.,—for more than half a century a resident of Cambridgeport: whose industry and frugality enabled him to accumulate a handsome fortune, and who, amidst the cares and requirements of his calling, found time to cultivate a taste for literature and art, and whose collection of books and paintings were widely known,—have decided to appropriate the sum of ten thousand dollars as a permanent fund for the

support of an annual course of public lectures in the City Hall.

The public "School or College," founded through the liberality of the Rev. John Harvard, aided by a grant of four hundred pounds from the General Court, and encouraged and enlarged subsequently by further State grants, as well as by private endowments, now stands foremost among the literary institutions of the country, and although Cambridge was never the "Metropolis of the Province of Massachusetts," yet as long as "Old Harvard" shall remain in our midst, we shall be recognised as the "Metropolis in the Province of Letters" in this part of the world.

The freedom of the two Bridges connecting Cambridge with the metropolis, (on which tolls amounting to upwards of *two millions of dollars* have been paid); the introduction of gas; the construction of the horse railroad; the partial supply of pure water, which will, no doubt, sooner or later become general; the high character of the public schools, the location of Harvard University within its limits, and the many natural advantages which Cambridge possesses, make it a desirable place of residence, and being also favorably adapted to many kinds of business, its growth is not likely to fail of being steady and sure.

























BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 9999 03873 126 9



